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ABSTRACT

A course on management in a cross-cultural environment was designed to address dilemmas and opportunities that individuals might encounter in work or study. The course attracted students with a broad variety of backgrounds. A main textbook was supplemented with readings, guest lectures, and a variety of class activities including case studies, exercises using critical incidents, games, and films. The critical incidents (descriptions of simple, believable situations) promoted class discussion and problem-solving skills. Readings of fictional short stories provided examples for the study of stages of cross-cultural adjustment. Proverbs were used for examining cultural and universal values. An exercise on marital roles in cultures stimulated heated discussion. Guest speakers and films were introduced near the end of the course when students would have a greater appreciation of their messages. Students' final class presentations enhanced the sense of shared responsibility for learning. Student response to the course was favorable. A brief bibliography and some course materials are included. (MSE)

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DESIGNING AND DELIVERING CROSS-CULTURAL INSTRUCTION

by

Miriam Ben-Yoseph, Ph.D.

Northwestern University College
Chicago, IL

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DESIGNING AND DELIVERING CROSS-CULTURAL INSTRUCTION

Miriam Ben-Yoseph, Ph.D.

Northwestern University College, Chicago

The concept of cross-cultural instruction has great popular appeal, as manifest in the large number of books, articles and conferences dealing with one aspect or another of the subject.

The interest is certainly understandable given the increasing importance of international business activity and the realization that effective competition in a global marketplace depends on the competence of the people involved. In this context, competence must be defined in terms of both work related skills and cultural sensitivity. In fact, research findings indicate that failure overseas rarely results from technical or professional incompetence; it is ignorance of other cultures and inability to adapt to different ways of life that causes failure.

Inspired by this flurry of interest in global literacy and guided by my own experiences as a working woman in various countries and in different fields (higher education, business, government), I designed and subsequently taught a course titled "Managing in a Cross-Cultural Environment" at Northwestern University College.

The purpose of this paper is to share with you some of the insights I gained from teaching this course. The handouts include

materials used in this class: student information forms, syllabus, bibliography, samples of case studies and critical incidents, and feedback forms.

I designed the Student Information Form primarily to be able to contact my students for any last minute changes. However, the information provided was helpful in other ways as well. It made me aware from the very beginning of the heterogeneous background of the students and their reasons for taking the course.

While most of the students were undergraduate business majors, several had graduate degrees. Most were working during the day, some for multinational companies, others were teaching at both private and public schools. One of the students was employed by the City of Chicago and was working with minorities, another student, a vietnamese refugee with several master degrees and a Ph.D., was head of a non profit organization that provides social services and training to vietnamese refugees.

Given the diversity of the students' background , it was not surprising that their reasons for taking the course were just as varied. While some of the younger undergraduates indicated that they took the course because it was a requirement for their major, most students wrote that for one reason or another they were curious about other cultures and eager to improve their understanding of people from different countries.

As indicated in the Syllabus, the course was designed to address dilemmas and opportunities that individuals may encounter as they work or study in multicultural or international environments. (An outline of the course can be found on page 3 of the Syllabus).

After a relatively long search for the "perfect" textbook, I settled for Nancy Adler's International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior. This book provided an excellent theoretical framework for most of the topics covered in class. (Nancy Adler's other publications as well as her workshops at last year's SIETAR conference have been extremely helpful in designing this course). However, over-reliance on discussions and presentations based exclusively on the textbook would not have allowed us to take advantage of each student's personal knowledge and experience for the benefit of the class as a whole. Consequently, the book was supplemented with additional readings, guest lectures, and a variety of class activities including: case studies, critical incidents, games, and films.

The time allotted for my presentation does not permit me to describe the merits of theses activities in detail. However, I will take a few moments to give you some examples. The exercises I will mention are not new but if you do not recognize them, please see the handouts for references.

Critical incidents provided an easy way of generating discussion because they describe simple and believable situations that could occur to anyone in a cross-cultural context, no matter the group one belongs to. They gave students an opportunity to tackle a certain problem before facing it in a real life situation. Copies of the incidents were distributed to the class and students were asked to explain each incident by selecting the answer from four alternative explanations.

In addition to critical incidents, studying the experience of others can be done through the medium of fiction by authors from a variety of cultures. Since my course lasted only six weeks, I could not expect my students to read the works of Balzac or James, for example, although it is difficult to find a better source than Balzac to gain insights into the french mentality or to provide a more vivid and effective description of anglo-american relations than through the fiction of James. Given the time limitation, we read short stories written by Albert Camus, Joseph Conrad, Arthur Schnitzler, Herman Hesse and others. For this purpose, I used an excellent anthology, <u>On Being Foreign: Culture Shock in Short Fiction</u>. In their introduction, the editors, Lewis and Jungman describe the various stages of cultural adjustment and then let several short stories "speak" for each stage. These additional readings helped students learn from the experience of others just as they did from the critical incidents but the discussion that these short stories prompted were more interesting and thought provoking.

One of the most enjoyable exercises focused on exploring cultural assumptions and values by examining proverbs. Students were asked to list proverbs from their own culture and indicate the value conveyed by them. We then discussed what the proverbs pointed out about a particular culture, which no longer applied to mainstream society, and why some proverbs are culture specific and others are more universal.

An exercise that stimulated heated discussion required students to agree or disagree with a list of statements on marital roles according to the culture they were brought up in. Given the nature of some of these statements ("Husbands should be more strict with their wives"; "Marriage is the best career for the woman"), the exercise turned into a battle of the sexes regardless of the cultural background of the participants.

While the exercises were done throughout the duration of the course, films and guest speakers were brought in only towards the end of the course. I assumed or hoped that students would be able to comment more extensively on the films and have a better appreciation for the experiences of the guest speakers, having taken the course.

As the course progressed these activities seemed to help students <u>experience</u> various aspects of cultural differences, respond to them, and begin integrating them in their own ways of thinking and behaving.

Since cross-cultural management is a relatively new field, on many issues there is very little research available, on others no research at all; therefore, it would have been counterproductive to base grading on formal testing. Examinations could have created an impression of certainty in what still is a very ambiguous field. On the other hand, emphasizing class participation was beneficial not only for student evaluation but for other purposes as well. Practically everybody in the class has had some sort of cross-cultural experience with people of another country, ethnic group, religion, or social class. Sharing these experiences with each other enabled students to understand the relevance of cross-cultural instruction to their own lives. The case studies, critical incidents, films, and the presentations given by guest speakers with extensive international experience in various parts of the world supplemented the students' own experiences and provided additional opportunities for discussion. Finally, the students' presentations to the class which required gathering of information of particular interest to the student, enhanced the sense of shared responsibility for the learning process not only among students but also between students and teacher. Topics selected by students for their final class presentations included: About Vietnam and Vietnamese Culture; Cross-Cultural Negotiations; The Western Expatriate Spouse in Arab Society; Culture Shock in the U.S.; The Impact of Culture on Advertising; Doing Business in Denmark. Several students arranged interviews with people knowledgeable in their area of interest

and some students even managed to bring these "experts" to class to allow their peers to ask their own questions.

The Feedback Form was designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the course. In retrospect I realized that this form was too generic for the kind of feedback I was looking for. Instead of just rating the broad teaching methods (my lectures, guest lectures, exercises), I should have asked questions about specific topics I lectured on (Culture, Communication, Women in International Business), specific guest speakers (here I should have mentioned their names and presentations) and specific exercises (case studies, games, critical incidents). By being more specific, I would have been in a better position to prepare for subsequent courses.

In any case, most students indicated that the class met their expectations, noting a better understanding of people of different cultures, a greater sensitivity to people in general, and a desire to work or study in a foreign country. Two students objected to the emphasis placed on class participation. They felt that the class was biased in favor of those who are more articulate and less shy in group situations. Three others wrote that time was too short for a course of this nature and suggested that I teach it during a full semester and not during a six week summer session.

While I disagree with the comments on class participation for reasons mentioned above, I certainly agree that cross-cultural instruction must be delivered over an extended period of time. From my personal point of view, however, time is measured in years and not in weeks. There are no quick-fix solutions to global illiteracy; cross-cultural instruction must be seen as a long term proposition.

STUDENT INFORMATION

NAME _____

HOME ADDRESS _____

HOME PHONE NO _____

GRADUATE/UNDERGRADUATE _____

PRESENT EMPLOYER, POSITION, RESPONSIBILITIES (IF APPLICABLE)

_____

_____

WORK PHONE NO _____

WHY DID YOU TAKE THIS COURSE? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MANAGING IN A CROSS-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

MIRIAM BEN-YOSEPH, Ph.D.

Brief Course Description

This course will address dilemmas and opportunities that individuals may encounter as they work or study in multicultural and international environments.

Purpose of Course

The course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the issues involved in managing one's life and career while moving across international borders.

The purpose of this course is to increase the effectiveness of individuals in identifying, understanding and managing cultural differences.

Text and Readings

Adler J. Nancy. International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior. Boston: Kent Publishings, 1986. Other required readings will be handed out in class.

Course Structure

The variety of methods used in the course include lectures, readings, case studies, videotapes, critical incidents, and indepth discussions. Guest speakers will be invited to talk about their international experiences.

Grade Distribution

Activity	Due	Percent
Class Participation	Ongoing	50
Short presentation	6th Session	10
Final Presentation or Written Report	Last 3 sessions	40

Notes:

1. Class participation involves attendance and contribution to class activities and discussions. This recognizes preparation for each session.

2. The short class presentation (10 minutes) is a description of the student's proposed project. It should include a brief outline of the selected topic, methodology, and sources of information the student plans to use to complete the project. Potential topics will be suggested during the first session.

3. The final presentation to the class on the completed project will occur during the last three sessions of the course. Students are encouraged to be creative by inviting outside speakers and by using visual aids such as handouts, transparencies, flipcharts, videotapes and slides. Students must stay within presentation time limits (40 minutes) including questions and answers.

4. Under certain circumstances, the final class presentation may be replaced by a written report. The paper must be double-spaced and typewritten.

Phone Number and Availability to Students

Phone number is 475-2756.

If I cannot talk to you when you call, please leave a phone number where I can reach you during the evening hours.

About the Instructor

Miriam Ben-Yoseph is a Product Manager for International Services at Continental Bank. Originally from Rumania, she obtained her education in Israel and the United States. She has taught at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and at Northwestern University.

Course Outline

The following topics will be discussed:

1. Why International?

2. Why are Americans Considered "Innocents" Abroad?

3. The Meaning of Culture

   - Culture Defined
   - Cultural Orientations
   - Cultural Diversity

4. Comparing and Contrasting Cultures

   - Individual
   - World
   - Human Relations
   - Activity
   - Time
   - Space

5. Culture Shock

   - Definition
   - Symptoms
   - Stages
   - How to Combat Culture Shock

6. Cross-Cultural Communication

   - Issues in Cross-Cultural Communication

     · Misperception
     · Misinterpretation
     · Misevaluation

   - Effective Cross-Cultural Communication

7. Language

   - What is Language?
   - Language and Culture
   - Language and International Business

8. Non-Verbal Communication

   - Characteristics Across Cultures
   - Critical Dimensions

9. The Impact of Culture on Work Behaviour

   - Hofstede's Four Dimension Model
   - Strategies for Managing Cultural Diversity
   - Cross-Cultural Leadership, Motivation and Decision Making

10. Skills Necessary for Overseas Success

11. Women in International Business

   - Expatriate Managers
   - Espatriate Wives

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Name: _____

MANAGING IN A CROSS-CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT
FEEDBACK FORM

Please answer the following questions. Your input will help us prepare future courses of this type. Most questions require only an "X" in the appropriate space.

Many thanks for your help!!!

1. How would you rate this course overall?

___ Excellent ___ Good ___ Fair ___ Poor

2. Did this course meet:

___ Most of your expectations?
___ Some of your expectations?
___ None of your expectations?

3. In your opinion, did the course contain:

___ Too much material for the time allotted?
___ About the right amount of material?
___ Not enough material - too many sessions dragged?

4. Please rate the following:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Lectures	___	___	___	___
Class Discussions/Presentations	___	___	___	___
Case Studies/Critical Incidents	___	___	___	___
Films	___	___	___	___
Guest Speakers	___	___	___	___

5. Any other comments, suggestions, recommendations?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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days later, as they were going over some details, the young chairman's grandfather happened to drop in. He began to comment on how the company had been formed and had been built up by the traditional practices, talking about some of the policies that the young executives had recently discarded. Phil expected the new chairman to explain some of the new innovative and developmental policies they had both agreed upon. However, the young man said nothing; instead, he just nodded and agreed with his grandfather. Phil was bewildered and frustrated over the days of work he had put into the development of those strategies, and he started to protest. The atmosphere in the room became immediately tense, but no one offered any further argument. A week later the Japanese company withdrew from the negotiations concerning a relationship with Phil's company.

Phil was understandably distraught. How would you help him sort out what happened?

(1) The Japanese are very unpredictable and one can never tell, no matter how well things seem to be going, what the outcome will be.
(2) The chairman was just too young to really understand about how businesses should be run.
(3) The Japanese have a respect for elders and that takes preference over knowledge of the subject.
(4) The young chairman was intimidated by his grandfather and was coerced to withdraw.

The discussions of these alternative explanations begin on page 175.

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A MANAGER'S DILEMMA

Ned Schwartz, the manager of a large factory operation in Canada, had been transferred to an operation of the same size in a Central American branch, as its production had always been low. Ned had a reputation of getting things done, but from the start Ned had a hard time. Government regulations made procuring needed materials difficult. Communication from his site to headquarters was slow and often garbled. Even Ned's personal

From: Intercultural Interactions

work habits had to be changed. He was used to working late and inspecting the plant after most of the workers had gone home, but strict military rule imposed curfew hours over such installations as Ned's. In his own country there were organizations to protest such unreasonable restrictions, but superiors here said there was nothing one could do. Ned became increasingly depressed and ineffective. He finally asked to be sent back to his original operation.

What can help explain Ned's situation?

(1) The job was not really appropriate for Ned since the difficulties were too great.
(2) Ned found himself in a situation where he had relatively little control over matters.
(3) Operations in Third World countries are impossible to bring to maximization given the resources available.
(4) Ned did not have the proper local support. If he had been nicer to local authorities and workers, they would have offered him more cooperation.

The discussions of these alternative explanations begin on page 176.

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WHO'S IN CHARGE?

The president of Janice Tani's firm asked her, as chief executive of the marketing division, and her staff (three male MBAs) to set up and close an important contract with a Japanese firm. He thought his choice especially good as Janice (a Japanese American from California) knew the industry well and could also speak Japanese.

As she and her staff were being introduced, Janice noticed a quizzical look on Mr. Yamamoto's face and heard him repeat "chief executive" to his assistant in an unsure manner. After Janice had presented the merits of the strategy in Japanese, referring to notes provided by her staff, she asked Mr. Yamamoto what he thought. He responded by saying that he needed to discuss some things further with the head of her department. Janice explained that was why she was there. Smiling, Mr. Yamamoto replied that

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that he was a step nearer the Bowery slum. And when they came to the gate Bryden said:

"I must walk on or I shall miss the train."

"But," she said, "you are not going now—you are not going today?"

"Yes," he said, "I am coming back."

"If you are coming back, James, why don't you let me go with you?"

"You couldn't walk fast enough. We should miss the train."

"One moment, James. Don't make me suffer; tell me the truth. You are not coming back. Your clothes—where shall I send them?"

He hurried away, hoping he would come back. He tried to think that he liked the country he was leaving, that it would be better to have a farmhouse and live there with Margaret Dirken than to serve drinks behind a counter in the Bowery. He did not think he was telling her a lie when he said he was coming back. Her offer to forward his clothes touched his heart, and at the end of the road he stood and asked himself if he should go back to her. He would miss the train if he waited another minute, and he ran on. And he would have missed the train if he had not met a car. Once he was on the car he felt himself safe—the country was already behind him. The train and the boat at Cork were mere formulae; he was already in America.

And when the tall skyscraper stuck up beyond the harbor he felt the thrill of home that he had not found in his native village and wondered how it was that the smell of the bar seemed more natural than the smell of fields, and the roar of crowds more welcome than the silence of the lake's edge. He entered into negotiations for the purchase of the barroom. He took a wife, she bore him sons and daughters, the barroom prospered, property came and went; he grew old, his wife died, he retired from business, and reached the age when a man begins to feel there are not many years in front of him, and that all he has had to do in life has been done. His children married, lonesomeness began to creep about him in the evening, and when he looked into the firelight, a vague tender reverie floated up, and Margaret's soft eyes and name vivified the dusk. His wife and children passed out of mind, and it seemed to him that a memory was the only real thing he possessed, and the desire to see Margaret again grew intense. But she was an old woman, she had married, maybe she was dead. Well, he would like to be buried in the village where he was born.

There is an unchanging, silent life within every man that none knows but himself, and his unchanging silent life was his memory of Margaret Dirken. The barroom was forgotten and all that concerned it, and the things he saw most clearly were the green hillside, and the bog lake and the rushes about it, and the greater lake in the distance, and behind it the blue line of wandering hills.

From: On Being Foreign: Culture Shock in Short Fiction
An International Anthology

T. J. Lewis and R. E. Jungman, Editors

Jorge Luis Borges

The Captive

THIS STORY IS TOLD out in one of the old frontier towns—either Junín or Tapalquén. A boy was missing after an Indian raid; it was said that the marauders had carried him away. The boy's parents searched for him without any luck; years later, a soldier just back from Indian territory told them about a blue-eyed savage who may have been their son. At long last they traced him (the circumstances of the search have not come down to us and I dare not invent what I don't know) and they thought they recognized him. The man, marked by the wilderness and by primitive life, no longer understood the words of the language he spoke in childhood, but he let himself be led, uncurious and willing, to his old house. There he stopped—maybe because the others stopped. He stared at the door as though not understanding what it was. All of a sudden, ducking his head, he let out a cry, cut through the entranceway and the two long patios on the run, and burst into the kitchen. Without a second's pause, he buried his arm in the soot-blackened oven chimney and drew out the small knife with the horn handle that he had hidden there as a boy. His eyes lit up with joy and his parents wept because they had found their lost child.

Maybe other memories followed upon this one, but the Indian could not live indoors and one day he left to go back to his open spaces. I would like to know what he felt in that first bewildering moment in which past and present merged; I would like to know whether in that dizzying instant the lost son was born again and died, or whether he managed to recognize, as a child or a dog might, his people and his home.

Translated from the Spanish by Norman Thomas di Giovanni

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SELECTION OF EXERCISES FOR SMALL GROUPS

Robert Kohls
Paula Barnak
Sandra Tijitendero
Jackie Segars

A WAY OF GETTING AT AMERICAN VALUES

Robert Kohls

Write on the blackboard:
Cleanliness is next to godliness.
Time is money.
A woman's place is in the home.
Little children should be seen and not heard.

Ask everyone in the group to take 10 to 15 minutes to write down all the American axioms and proverbs they have heard over and over again. (If any foreign students are in the group, have them do the same for their country or countries.)

Then share and collect by writing on the blackboard.

Then, next to each axiom, determine (as a group) what value is being taught.

Examples	Values
Cleanliness is next to godliness	Cleanliness
Time is money	Value of time thriftiness
A penny saved is a penny earned	Thriftiness
Birds of a feather flock together	Guilt through association
Don't cry over spilt milk	Practicality
Waste not; want not	Frugality
Early to bed, early to rise...	Diligence
God helps those who help themselves	Initiative
It's not whether you win or lose, but...	Good sportsmanship
A man's home is his castle	Privacy; property
No rest for the wicked	Guilt; work ethic
You've made your bed, now sleep in it	Responsibility

These are only a few, very random examples. The list is endless, but the point has been made. With only a dozen or so axioms, you have a pretty good list of American values being expressed.

You might then want to have the groups brainstorm other basic American values which are still missing from our list.

Comments:

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Adapted from "Personal Role Model" in Guidelines for Peace Corps Cross-Cultural Training, 1970. Albert R. Wight and Mary Anne Hammons, eds.

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(23) MARITAL ROLES SCALE

OBJECTIVE

Clarification of one's preferred marital roles as they pertain to his/her cultural identifications.

PARTICIPANTS

One or more persons. Facilitator if done as a group exercise. Group members should represent various cultural viewpoints.

MATERIALS

Pencils. Scales for each participant.

SETTING

No special requirements.

TIME

At least ten minutes.

PROCEDURE

1) Each participant is given a copy of the scale and a pencil.

2) Participants fill in one response before each of the following statements to indicate what they believe is right as a matter of principle. The responses are to be marked as follows:

SA -- Strongly Agree; A -- Agree; U -- Undecided; D -- Disagree;

SD -- Strongly Disagree.

3) If done as a group exercise, compare and discuss responses in regard different cultural beliefs.

_____ 1. The husband should help with the housework.

_____ 2. The wife should take a job if she wants to.

_____ 3. The husband should help wash dishes.

_____ 4. If a husband runs around, so can his wife.

_____ 5. Wives are too independent these years.

_____ 6. If the husband wants children, the wife should agree.

_____ 7. The husband should decide who is to spend the extra money.

_____ 8. Husbands should be more strict with their wives.

_____ 9. What a husband does in his spare time is his own business.

_____10. The husband should decide where to live.

_____11. The wife should fit her life to her husband's.

_____12. The husband's wishes should come first in most things.

_____13. Marriage is the best career for the woman.

_____14. The husband should wear the "pants" in the family.

_____15. If the husband is running around with another woman, his wif should put up with it until he comes to his senses.

_____16. It's okay for the wife to earn as much as her husband.

_____17. A wife should let her husband decide most things.

_____18. Almost all money matters should be decided by the husband.